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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 1315

E.O. 11652: XGDS4

TAGS: PINT, MORG, HO

SUBJECT: CARLOS ROBERTO REINA COMMENTS ON MILITARY REORGANIZATION

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1298

BEGIN SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF APRIL 4, CARLOS ROBERTO REINA, LEADER OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT FACTION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, PRESENTED HIS VIEWS ON RECENT CHANGES IN THE HONDURAN MILITARY. HE APPROVES CHANGES AND BELIEVES THAT THE LT. COLONEL'S GROUP ISEGONESTLY MOTIVATED AND PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH CLEANING UP THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ARMED FORCES. HE EXPECTS CABINET CHANGES IN THE FUTURE BUT SEES NO IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE IN THE GOH. ALTHOUGH THESE OFFICERS MAY BE MORE AMENABLE TO SUGGESTIONS OF A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, REINA DOES NOT REGARD ELECTIONS AS LIKELY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. END SUMMARY .

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH POLOFF APRIL 4, CARLOS ROBERTO REINA, LEADER OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEFT FACTION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY, STATED THAT HE REGARDS CHANGES RECENTLY MADE IN THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES AS BEING GOOD FOR THE IJTOLOYAMWNHE VIEWS LT. COLONELS AS BEING MOTIVATED BY AN HONEST DESIRE TO PURGE CORRUPTION FROM THE MILITARY AND IMPROVE ITS
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EFFICIENCY. HE IDENTIFIED LT. COL. MARIO FONSECA LOPEZ

(COMMANDER OF FRANCISCO MORAZAN MILITARY SCHOOL) AS THE
LIKELY LEADER OF THE LT. COLONELS GROUP.

2. REINA BELIEVES THAT THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES DID NOT
WELCOME THE NEWS OF RECENT CHANGES (SEE REF) BECAUSE HE
THINKS THEY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED A POLITICAL
MOVE TO THE RIGHT, AWAY FROM THE GOH PLANS FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND AGRARIAN REFORM. RECENT CHANGES IN THE
MILITARY, REINA BELIEVES, WILL, ON THE CONTRARY, GREATLY
REINFORCE THOSE PLANS. HE ADDED THAT THE MARCH 31
SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL BULLETIN CAME AS A COMPLETE
SURPRISE TO HIM AND THAT, GIVEN THE NAMING OF MELGAR AS
ARMED FORCES CHIEF, HE INITIALLY THOUGHT BULLETINS
SIGNALLED A MOVE BY RIGHTISTS WITHIN THE MILITARY.

3. REINA REGARDS MELGAR AS A RIGHTIST WHO IS ADDITIONALLY
ONE OF THE MOST CORRUPT OF THE ARMY COLONELS. HE BELIEVES
MELGAR WAS CHOSEN ONLY TO MAKE THE CHANGE MORE ACCEPTABLE
TO OPEZ AND TO AVOID THE COMPETITION NECESSARY TO CHOOSE
A FIRST AMONG EQUALS FROM THE LT. COLONELS GROUP. REINA
ADDED THAT MELGAR IS ABSOLUTELY WITHOUT POWER AND THAT LOPEZ
HIMSELF CAN DO NOTHING ABOUT THE COURSE OF EVENTS.

4. THE CHANGES WITHIN THE ARMY, REINA BELIEVES, ARE A
FAIT ACCOMPLI, AND THAT THE DISPLACED COLONELS ARE IN NO
POSITION TO FORM AN EFFECTIVE RESISTANCE. THE AIR FORCE,
HOWEVER, IS A DIFFERENT SITUATION. REINA SAYS THAT WHILE
IN THE ARMY POWER FLOWS LOGICALLY TO THOSE COMMANDING
TROOPS, THERE IS NO SUCH SIMPLE POWER BASE IN THE AIR
FORCE. SECONDLY, THE COLONELS DISPLACED IN THE AIR
FORCE ARE MUCH HIGHER QUALITY OFFICERS THAN THEIR ARMY
COUNTERPARTS AND LESS INCLINED TO QUIETLY ACCEPT THEIR
DISMISSAL. HE SAID THAT AIR FORCE CHIEF SOTO CANO HAS
NOT ACCEPTED HIS DISMISSAL AND THE SUCCESS OF THE MOVE
TO REPLACE THAT SERVICE'S SENIOR OFFICERS IS STILL MUCH
IN DOUBT.

5. TURNING TO THE CIVILIAN SIDE OF THE GOH, REINA SAID
THAT HE EXPECTS THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF SOME CABINET CHANGES
NEXT WEEK. HE BELIEVES THAT SOME MINISTERS WILL BE
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RETAINED AND IDENTIFIED LABMIN GUATAMA FONSECA AS AN
HONEST, REFORM MINDED MINISTER WHOSE PHILOSOPHY WOULD BE
COMPATIBLE WITH THE NEW MILITARY LEADERSHIP. HE BELIEVES
THAT MINFIN ACOSTA BONILLA AND MINECON BENNATON AS THOSE
MOST LIKELY TO BE FIRED. REINA SAID THAT, GIVEN THE
XVEXZXIDMKIENTATION#OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP, THERE WILL
BE MANY CAPABLE CIVILIANS WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN A
NEW CABINET. HE SAID THAT HE HIMSELF WOULD CAREFULLY

CONSIDER ANY CALL TO SERVICE. HE ADDED THAT HE BELIEVES CIVILIAN POLICY OF THE GOH IS ALREADY BEING MADE WITHIN THE SUPERIOR DEFENSE COUNCIL.

6. REINA IS CERTAIN THAT THE MOVE BY THE LT. COLONELS GROUP CAME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE TO LOPEZ, WHO BELIEVED THAT THE CHANGES WITHIN THE MILITARY BEGUN LAST FEBRUARY HAD QUIETED THE DISSATISFACTION OF THE DISSIDENT YOUNGER OFFICERS. CONCERNING LOPEZ'S FUTURE, REINA SAID THAT LOPEZ WOULD BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN AS CHIEF OF STATE FOR THE INDEFINITE FUTURE, SO LONG AS HE MADE NO ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF EVENTS. HE SAID THAT THE GENERAL'S HEALTH IS NOT GOOD AND THAT HE IS HAVING SERIOUS MARITAL PROBLEMS. REINA REGARDS IT LIKELY THAT MRS. LOPEZ WILL LEAVE SHORTLY TO LIVE WITH A DAUGHTER IN LONDON AND SAID THAT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE GENERAL MIGHT FOLLOW (PERMANENTLY) AT A LATER TIME.

7. REINA BELIEVES THAT THE GROUP NOW HOLDING THE REINS OF POWER IN THE COUNTRY IS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN REFORMING THE MILITARY AND SECONDARILY INTERESTED IN THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATION OF HONDURAS. THEREFORE, HE VIEWS THE CURRENT GROUP OF LT. COLONELS AS BEING MORE AMENABLE TO THE IDEA OF A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT THAN THE MEN THEY REPLACED. HOWEVER, HE DOES NOT EXPECT THEM TO CALL FOR ELECTIONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
SANCHEZ

NOTE BY OC/T: # AS RECEIVED.

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